

THE CONTROVERSY OVER 'THE MYSTERIOUS ORIGINS OF MAN'

**Archaeological
evidence for
humanity having an
extremely ancient
history on this
planet has been
condemned as
being dangerous to
established
scientific belief.**

by Michael A. Cremo © 1997

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The following is the text of a talk given by Michael Cremo at the Ancient Astronaut Society World Conference in Orlando, Florida, USA, on 8 August 1997.

In February 1996 my book, *Forbidden Archeology*, was featured in an NBC television special called *The Mysterious Origins of Man*. It was produced and directed by Bill Cote and his associates. This television program was seen by tens of millions of people in the United States, and it inspired an extremely emotional, negative response from the scientific world which was shocked by the program's documentation of evidence for extreme human antiquity.

The nature of this response says a lot about mainstream science. We are normally taught that scientists are not attached to any particular theory and are always ready to change their ideas when confronted with new evidence. But the reaction of mainstream science to *The Mysterious Origins of Man* demonstrates this is not always true.

Before analysing the scientific responses to *The Mysterious Origins of Man*, I want to place all of this in context, showing the relationship of the show's archaeological evidence to the ancient astronaut hypothesis.

According to standard scientific ideas, humans like ourselves appeared fairly recently on this planet, about 100,000 years ago. Before that, there would have been only more ape-like human ancestors which came into existence four to five million years ago. The first primitive apes and monkeys would have come into existence about 40 or 50 million years ago, and life itself arose two or three billion years ago. We are told that all of the physical evidence ever discovered by scientists supports this scenario.

But in my book, *Forbidden Archeology* (co-authored with Richard Thompson), I document hundreds of cases showing that human beings like ourselves have existed on this planet for two or three billion years.

This is consistent with the historical accounts found in the ancient Sanskrit writings of India. As a member of the Bhaktivedanta Institute (the science studies branch of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness), I have carefully studied these texts for over 20 years and have found they provide many accurate clues to the true story of human origins and antiquity.

I will not give a detailed account of the archaeological evidence presented in *Forbidden Archeology*. I talked about that at the last world conference in Berne, Switzerland. Today I want to focus on how this evidence relates to the ancient astronaut hypothesis.

If, as the evidence indicates, human beings have existed on this planet for over two billion years, this rules out any Darwinian evolutionary explanation for human origins that is current today. In my opinion, this means we have to look toward an extraterrestrial explanation for our presence here on Earth.

The ancient Sanskrit writings of India speak not only about an ancient human presence on this planet. They also speak about humanoid creatures from other parts of the universe who travelled in spacecraft known as *vimana*. In the *Bhagavata Purana*, also known as the *Shrimad Bhagavatam*, we are told that once Shiva and Parvati were sitting in an assembly of sages when King Chitraketu flew overhead in his *vimana*, on a voyage from another planet. It is interesting to note that Shiva and his consort Parvati are considered gods, whereas King Chitraketu, who was engaged in interplanetary travel in his *vimana*, was a human, originally from Earth. In other words, the ancient Sanskrit texts make a clear distinction between space-travelling humans and gods.

This is relevant to the ancient astronaut hypothesis, which in one form suggests that all accounts of gods in ancient writings represent the attempts of ancient peoples to translate

the experience of seeing actual humanoid space visitors into mythical supernatural beings (gods).

We should, however, be careful that we do not become victims of a false dichotomy. When confronted with two possibilities, it is tempting to think that either 'this' must be true or 'that' may be true. In other words, either there were ancient astronauts or there were gods. But both may be true. Ancient peoples may have encountered both astronauts (humans using advanced technology for interplanetary travel) and gods (supernatural beings, by which I mean beings from regions of nature not normally accessible to Earth humans). That is what the ancient Sanskrit writings suggest to us.

So we should not become 'cargo cultists' in reverse. Earlier in this century, when Pacific tribal people encountered Westerners coming down from the sky in airplanes full of valuable goods they began to build systems of worship around the experience, translating the real technological into the mythical supernatural. This has probably occurred in the past as well. But we should be careful not to automatically translate all accounts of the supernatural in ancient writings into something that fits our present technological experience. We should remain open to the possibility that in ancient times the Earth was visited by both astronauts and gods.

According to the ancient Sanskrit writings of India, humans on this planet originated by a process of descent with modification. This process thus has something in common with Darwinism, which also posits a process of descent with modification. But the process described in the ancient Sanskrit writings is intelligently guided.

The ancient Sanskrit writings tell not only of ancient human civilisations and space-travelling humans but also of some very interesting genetic manipulations and variations on the normal

reproductive processes. Such things as test tube babies, cloning and genetic engineering are not new. They were there in ancient times, and the action was not confined to this Earth: it was interplanetary. Two years from now, at the next world conference in Cologne, Germany, I will speak to you about this. This process of guided reproductive modification is also the subject of my next book, which I am calling *Human Devolution*.

What this all adds up to is that Darwinian explanations of human origins are not adequate. The very existence of ancient astronauts poses a strong challenge to Darwinian concepts of human origins. The ancient astronaut hypothesis tells us that humans on this planet were visited in the distant past by humanoid beings from other planets. Let us carefully consider the implications of this.

The very existence of ancient astronauts poses a strong challenge to Darwinian concepts of human origins.

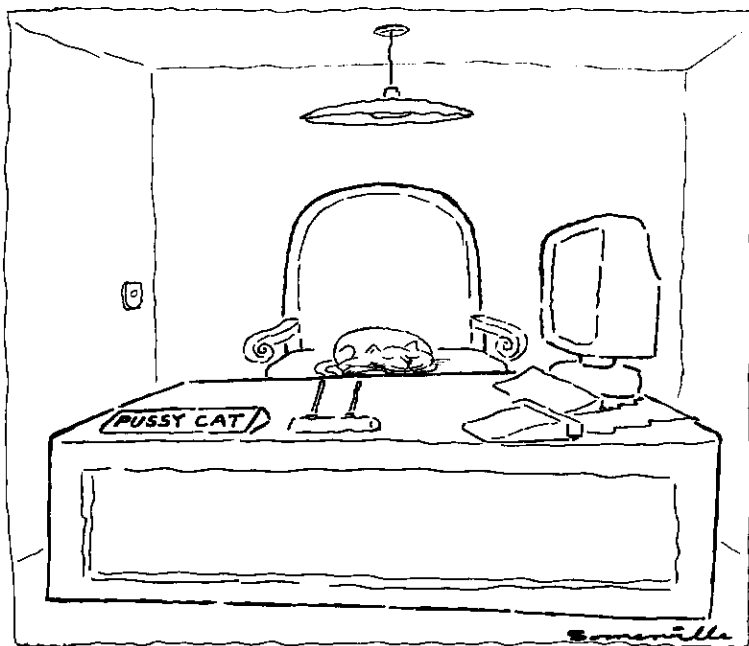
According to Darwinism, the structure of physical bodies is encoded in the DNA in the body's cells. To change the bodily form, the DNA must be changed. These changes are said to be random, resulting from copying errors, mutations and recombination. To go from the first one-celled living things to humans like ourselves required, we are told, millions of random genetic changes over the course of more than two billion years. This has led leading evolutionists such as Stephen J. Gould to say that if we were to 'run the tape again' the evolutionary process would

probably not give us upright-walking humans, apemen or apes. So it is extremely unlikely that humanlike creatures could have evolved in Darwinian fashion both on this planet and somewhere else in the universe. In other words, the very fact that there are humanoid creatures from other parts of the universe is a good argument against current Darwinian explanations for the origin of humans on this planet.

Having established the connection of the evidence reported in *The Mysterious Origins of Man* with the ancient astronaut hypothesis, we can now proceed to examine the heated scientific responses to this program. These responses amount to a kind of 'knowledge filtration'.

In my book, *Forbidden Archeology*, I described not only evidence for extreme human antiquity but also the processes by which dominant groups in science exclude this evidence from scientific discussion and public attention. These processes, which I collectively refer to as the "knowledge filter", are a powerful factor in keeping certain kinds of evidence relatively unknown.

In the case of *The Mysterious Origins of Man*, the knowledge filtration process began to operate even as the show was being filmed. I suggested to the producers that they film stone artefacts discovered in Californian gold-mines during the 19th century. Geological evidence indicates that these objects are about 50 million years old. The artefacts are stored at the Phoebe Hearst Natural History Museum at the University of California in Berkeley. The responses from the museum officials are interesting.



"At first we were told they could not make the time," wrote producer Bill Cote in a letter to me (26 August 1996). "We countered, saying we had plenty of time and could wait three or four months." Museum officials responded with a letter claiming they had a shortage of staff and funds. The producers said they would pay all the costs involved in bringing the artefacts out of storage for filming, including overtime pay for the workers. The museum refused this offer. The producers continued to seek permission through various channels. "We patiently went all the way to the head of publicity for the University," explained Bill Cote in his letter, "but it seems the museum director has final say, and she said no."

"A similar situation occurred when we tried to obtain permission to film the pyramid complex at Teotihuacan, near Mexico City," wrote Bill Cote. "We approached, through proper channels, the director of the site. He wanted us to promise that we would make no mention of UFOs or spacemen building the pyramid. I thought this was odd, but since that was not our intention, I replied in all honesty that we would not imply this. Then he demanded a copy of our full script. We had not yet written the scene and told him so, but he insisted.

"We spent a few hours and drafted a modest version which included the theory of Hugh Harleston Jr, a respected researcher, that the slope angle of one of the facets of the Pyramid of the Sun was aligned to the same degree of latitude as the location of the pyramid itself in the northern hemisphere (an easily verifiable fact). In effect, the sunrise over the pyramid on the vernal equinox would cast a shadow over this facet in an instant, thus making the whole pyramid a sort of giant clock. We were interested in demonstrating the advanced knowledge of the ancients. But we were denied permission to bring our cameras into the site or even to fly over in a helicopter, despite the fact that we were willing to pay all the appropriate fees, had gone through both archeological channels and the Mexican film authority... The good old boys' network continues to hold a powerful control over information that threatens to upset the established view."

The knowledge filtration process, which began with the filming of *The Mysterious Origins of Man*, continued with even greater intensity when the program was shown to the public. The anti-Darwin message of the show was the main reason why scientists reacted so angrily. To my knowledge, the broadcast of *The Mysterious Origins of Man* by NBC in February of 1996 was the first time in history that a major American television network had aired a program challenging Darwinian explanations of human origins. This apparently caught the scientific community by surprise.

The surprise is evident in the following excerpt from an article in *Science*, a journal published for scientists by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (8 March 1996, p. 1357):

"The claims of creationists—the young age of Earth, that fossils put the lie to the theory of evolution—routinely send biologists into fits. But those fits pale before the indignation spilling out, mostly over the Internet, since Sunday evening, 25 February, when a major US television network ran a 'special' suggesting that

humans coexisted with the dinosaurs, and that the scientific establishment was suppressing the evidence."

Here are some samples of some of the 'Internet indignation' that poured out from the scientific community, taken from a report released by B.C. Video on 4 March 1996:

"I think you should apologize publicly for this show. It was appalling... Frankly, you are either morons or liars..." (D.L., colorado.edu)

"...the non-scientific public watching this drivel may be inclined to actually believe it and to vote for politicians who also believe it." (J.K., New Mexico State University)

"It's all a bunch of hooley, and my recommendation is to stay away." (B.D., Yale University)

"I recommend people write NBC and protest the presentation of this show as a documentary." (AD, University of Texas at Austin)

"You should be banned from the airwaves." (J.J., ALCI)

Why exactly did scientists react with such fury to *The Mysterious Origins of Man*? One reason is control over the minds of students.

The National Center for Science Education is dedicated to keeping Darwinism a central concept in America's schools. In the same *Science* article cited above, the president of the National

Center for Science Education complained that the phones in the headquarters of his organisation were constantly ringing with calls from science teachers who had difficulty answering questions from students who had seen *The Mysterious Origins of Man*.

Another concern that I noted in my study of hundreds of Internet messages was the fear among scientists that programs such as *The Mysterious Origins of Man* might eventually result in public pressure to decrease government funding of certain kinds of scientific research

supporting Darwinism. This concern is reflected in the message above from J.K.

The reactions to *The Mysterious Origins of Man* extended by individual expressions of negative opinions to the producers. Dr Jim Foley organised a letter campaign directed at the executives of NBC and the sponsors of the program, including Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Olive Garden, Toyota, Chevron, Kellogggs, J.C. Penney, Honda, Wendy's, General Motors, LensCrafters, Folger's Coffee, and M&Ms Candy.

A lot of the Internet messages among scientists were also heavily critical of *Forbidden Archeology*, which was featured in the show. But one participant in the Internet debate (D.T. Miller, 1 April 1996) noted: "It looks like most of the detractors haven't read the book. Could someone please explain to me how anyone can pose a valid criticism of a book they haven't read? (Yes, I've read the book.)"

Some of the Internet discussion regarding *Forbidden Archeology* was related to the mysterious metallic, grooved spheres found by miners in South Africa in mineral deposits over two billion years old. In the absence of any good explanation of how such objects could have formed naturally, the possibility remains open that they are the product of some kind of human intelligence. Some of the spheres were shown on the NBC television program.

On the Internet, scientists claimed they were natural "concre-

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tions" and that such things are very common, grooves and all. But when I challenged them to send me pictures or specimens of round metallic concretions with grooves running around their equators, none could do it.

If the scientific community in America was outraged when the program was first shown, you can imagine their reaction when they saw the following headlines from an Internet press release from NBC, dated 29 May 1996: "Controversy Surrounds *The Mysterious Origins of Man*... University Profs Want Special Banned from the Airwaves... Program that Dares to Challenge Accepted Beliefs about Pre-Historic Man will be Rebroadcast June 8 on NBC". Amazingly, NBC was using the objections of the scientists to promote another broadcast of the show!

The text of the press release stated: "NBC's *The Mysterious Origins of Man* sparked heated controversy within the academic community when originally broadcast February 25, 1996, and will be rebroadcast on Saturday, June 8 (8-9 pm ET). Professors of science and anthropology from some of the nation's most prestigious colleges and universities voiced strong opinions about some of the theories in the special, which challenged long-accepted beliefs about man's beginnings. The program presented startling evidence suggesting that man may have made the climb from Stone Age to civilization more than once; that present-day man is just the latest in this cycle, and that Darwin's Theory of Evolution has serious flaws."

Producer Bill Cote was quoted in the NBC press release as follows: "Our goal was simply to present the public with evidence which suggests an alternative view to some of our most accepted theories. We questioned fundamental issues that they [some scientists] felt should not be questioned. The bottom line is, the world is bigger than scientists can explain, and some of them want us to believe they can explain everything.

"We expected some controversy when we produced this show," Cote continued, "but no one was prepared for the enormous cry of outrage from members of the scientific community. While many viewers, including some scientists, praised the production as a great accomplishment and contributing to public education, many scientists expressed outrage and criticism."

Dr Jere H. Lipps, a palaeontologist at the University of California at Berkeley, wrote by e-mail to producer Bill Cote on 30 May 1996 (sending copies to various scientific discussion groups on the Internet): "I appreciate the advance notice of your press release about the reshowing of *The Mysterious Origins of Man*. Can you please provide me a list of the news organizations you sent your release to? As you expected, I am appalled that you and NBC would once again represent that program as the way science in America is done. It does not do you, NBC or the sponsors any honor whatsoever. It indicates to scientists a large degree of ignorance about how science works. You seem to think that scientists object to the theories presented. Not in most cases, because everything in the program has been dealt with by legitimate science already. You misrepresent the process of science—that is quite a different and detrimental thing. I can always straighten out bad ideas with my students, but trying to teach them an intelligent way to live their lives in this scientific society is very difficult when TV promotes a fraudulent view of how science works.

"I am amazed that NBC [will] show this program again as science, when a proper scientific presentation of the same issues would be both beneficial and entertaining to its viewers. As [you are] its writer and director, I can appreciate your desire to use our objections to promote it once again. It is, however, a pathetic way to make a buck, when honesty is so much better and [more] profitable."

As far as honesty is concerned, I hope no one will be deceived that it was anything other than the anti-Darwinian message of *The Mysterious Origins of Man* that provoked such intense reactions from Lipps and others. They *did* object to the theories presented. Also, the show provided a very good description of how science (the fundamentalist Darwinian part of it, anyway) really does work in practice. Fundamentalist Darwinians do unfairly try to prevent serious discussion of controversial evidence.

On the same day he sent his letter to Bill Cote, Lipps made this general appeal to scientists: "NBC is now proposing to reshow their scientific travesty, *The Mysterious Origins of Man*, using the objections of the scientific community as a selling point. This is a major disservice to the general public and misrepresentation of the majority of the scientists' objections... If you are worried

about science in America, tell your local NBC station, NBC and its various sponsors that you object to the portrayal of this program as science. America must get smart and we can make a difference."

Others proposed boycotts, as shown in this Internet message posted to Internet discussion groups for archaeologists and anthropologists by C. Wood on 31 May 1996: "Anybody know who the sponsors are? I would like to get an early start boycotting them. There's always the

offchance that some of them will pull their sponsorship." Still others proposed pressuring the executives of General Electric, the company that owns NBC.

Ten or 20 years ago, the campaign of intimidation waged by Lipps and other fundamentalist Darwinians in the scientific community would have been sufficient to keep NBC from airing the program again or force NBC to let a fundamentalist Darwinian commentator dictate to the public how they should see the show. That NBC had the courage to stand up to the intimidation and the audacity to use the protests from the fundamentalist Darwinians to promote the rebroadcast of the unchanged original show to the public is a refreshing sign that intellectual freedom is alive and well in America.

But representatives of orthodox science did not see things that way. They thought NBC should be severely punished for daring to air the show a second time.

On 17 June 1996, Dr Allison R. Palmer, president of the Institute for Cambrian Studies, wrote to the Federal Communications Commission, the government agency that grants licences to television broadcasting companies: "This e-mail is a request for the FCC to investigate and, I hope, seriously censure the National Broadcasting Company for crassly commercial, irresponsible journalism that seriously violates the trust the public should have in materials that are touted as credible by a major net-

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work... Last February they produced a program, *Mysterious Origins of Man*, that purported to be scientifically based, and received massive negative reactions from responsible scientists representing numerous areas of science. Following this response...they chose to use the reactions of the reputable and responsible science community to generate viewer interest by distributing PR announcements implying that the content of their show was science that the 'establishment' did not want brought before the public."

It is, however, patently clear that the 'establishment' did indeed not want the content of the NBC show brought before the public, and Palmer's letter to the FCC is excellent proof of this.

Palmer continued: "At the very least, NBC should be required to make substantial prime-time apologies to their viewing audience for a sufficient period of time so that the audience clearly gets the message that they were duped. In addition, NBC should perhaps be fined sufficiently so that a major fund for public science education can be established."

Palmer's attempt to get the FCC to punish NBC failed, but the very fact that such an attempt was made should tell us something. It is worth noting that copies of Palmer's letter were sent to the executives of NBC and were widely distributed to scientists on Internet discussion groups.

The unprecedented campaign of intimidation waged by Palmer, Lipps and their cohorts is a real demonstration of how fundamentalist Darwinian science (as opposed to most other science) works. Darwinism is an ideology that fundamentalist Darwinians uphold by unscientific means (after all, what is so scientific about trying to intimidate a television network into taking a show off the air?).

Darwinism is not a concept that can be demonstrated by ordinary scientific means. It is simply an article of faith. And adherents of this faith think that they have a right to impose it upon everyone and silence anyone who speaks against it to the general public. The fundamentalist Darwinians would like a monopoly on access to the thinking of the general public. Fortunately, they do not have it, and I hope they never will.

So yes, there is a knowledge filter. And one way it operates is to suppress evidence for extreme human antiquity, mainly because this evidence has strongly negative implications for Darwinian doctrine.

Editor's Notes:

- Michael Cremo is scheduled to speak at the 1998 NEXUS Conference in Sydney, Australia, on 25-26 July.
- *Forbidden Archeology: The Hidden History of the Human Race*, by Michael A. Cremo and Richard L. Thompson, was published in 1993 by Govardhan Hill Publishing, Badger, CA, USA (ISBN 0-9635309-8-4). It was reviewed in NEXUS 2/19. A 1995 Laura Lee interview with Michael Cremo was published in NEXUS 2/26.
- More extensive documentation of the scientific reactions to *The Mysterious Origins of Man* and *Forbidden Archeology* can be found in Michael Cremo's new book, *Forbidden Archeology's Impact*, which will be available in US bookstores in spring 1998. The book is published by BBT Science Books and distributed in the USA by Torchlight Publishing, phone (310) 837 8466, 1800-HIDDEN-1 (toll-free in USA), fax (310) 837 3363.
- Bill Cote, co-producer of *The Mysterious Origins of Man*, was a speaker at the 1997 NEXUS Conference. Copies of the video are available from NEXUS offices in Australia, New Zealand, UK and Europe; and in the USA from Adventures Unlimited, phone (815) 253 6300.